

# SOME FACTS AND FANCIES ABOUT THE FCC

During recent months a grave and dangerous situation has developed in American broadcasting. The implications, which are not well understood, are serious, not only for the sound future of American radio (commercial and educational) but for the basic liberties of the people.

The National Association of Broadcasters, under the shrewd leadership of Justin Miller, has been conducting a carefully-planned attack on the Federal Communications Commission for the alleged purpose of Protecting free speech and free enterprise in American radio. Since these are obviously excellent goals, and since the average American citizen has little knowledge of the structure and personnel of the broadcasting industry, the whole endeavor has sounded reasonable and has met with considerable success.

Mr. Miller has stumped the country, speaking at luncheon clubs, broadcast meetings, enlisting the sympathy of political figures. The trade papers have carried news about "ripper bills" designed to cripple or replace the FCC. Colliers magazine has taken up the cudgel for "free" radio. A new Washington newsletter, Capitol Radio Reporter, furnishing its readers with "inside news", warns continually against the threat ( a carefully-nurtured myth) of "Government radio ownership" and points out that radio, like the press, must fight to retain its freedom.

The average citizen (and legislator) does not know that American radio has been profitable beyond the wildest dreams of its pioneers. He does not know that only 1000-odd AM radio channel assignments exist in the U.S. and that no more are available. He does not know that broadcasting frequencies are so valuable that stations have been selling for 10 and 21 times their net worth.

The average citizen does not know that about 30 clear channel stations and 4 networks dominate the radio scene, nor does he know that 40,000-odd individuals in the broadcast industry and a handful of major advertisers now have almost uninhibited control over the most powerful emotional force with which the public mind has ever been faced. Naturally, they resist any change in the status quo.

Center of much of the current storm is the FCC report on the "Public Service Responsibility of Broadcast Licensees". It is the "Blue Book" which sets up tentative standards whereby station program operation might be reviewed and evaluated at license renewal time. This publication was greeted with the familiar cries of "Government domination", "censorship", "left-wing nonsense" and was construed by the NAB as a step in the direction of federal control of radio. Many individual station operators do subscribe to the FCC policy and views. But the official point of view is the view of the NAB leadership, which hopes to use the headman's axe.

The handwriting is clear--the conflict is essentially that of special privilege against the public interest. The danger is political--the new Congress is understandably intent on a certain amount of "house-cleaning".. It is our hope that they will understand the NAB interest goes deeper and has other objectives than "free speech" and "Free enterprise". Every member of the Senate and the House in every state should be advised that this is more than a question of bureaucracy, and that the broadcaster has responsibilities which extend beyond insuring the stockholder's annual dividend.

RICHAED B. HULL, Radio WOI, Iowa State College

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